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ON THE ESCAPE OF PRINCE LOUIS NAPOLEON FROM THE FORTRESS OF HAM.

BY JOSEPH ORSI.

MY INTERVIEW WITH H.R.H. THE DUKE OF BRUNSWICK, DECEMBER 3, 1845.

ON the 9th day of August, 1840, a royal decree was issued, convening the Chamber of Peers to sit as a court of justice to try Prince Louis Napoleon and his associates for landing at Boulogne an armed force with a view of upsetting the existing government.

The sentence passed on me was five years' imprisonment in the fortress of Doullens, for having commanded the steamer (the "City of Edinburgh") and carried arms and men against a government on friendly terms with England.

At the expiration of five years I was set at liberty, with the option of my submission either to perpetual banishment from the French territory, or to a compulsory residence in a French town designated by the minister of the interior.

As I could be of no use to the prince so long as I was under the surveillance of the French authorities, I informed the minister of my intention to return to England, and applied for a passport, which was delivered to me at once.

The prince was aware of my movements, and no sooner was my presence in London known to him, than he wrote me about his intention of making an escape from Ham, at any price, and at all risks and hazards he might be personally exposed to; as he had been formally and most peremptorily refused leave by the king to go and see his dying father at Florence, despite the repeated applications made by a large number of deputies and peers to King Louis Philippe to that effect.

The prince had been offered secretly many plans to effect his escape. Not one of them seemed practicable to him; and fearing that the suggestions emanated from the authorities, to sound his real intentions, he openly eschewed and condemned all idea of making his escape from the fortress.

The prince was keeping, all this time, a secret correspondence with me, through his faithful *valet de chambre*, Charles Thélin, who was allowed to go to Ham to buy whatever the prince required. At last, having made up his mind to follow the plan he had adopted to recover his liberty, the prince urgently requested me to find some one willing to advance him five or

six thousand pounds on the most tempting terms.

In his anxiety to be free, he sent me letters of introduction to several of his former friends in London, with a view of obtaining the necessary funds. Not one responded to his application. Twelve months of unceasing exertions had nearly exhausted and discouraged me. One day, among the different personages I had the opportunity of applying to, I happened to call on an M.P., formerly a bosom friend of the prince, who plainly told me that if he could ever be induced to lay out 6,000*l.* on account of the prince, it would be on the distinct understanding that the money should serve to keep him a prisoner for life. This sudden burst of *charitable* feeling on the part of this gentleman was not likely to be quietly acquiesced in by me, in the agitated state of mind I was in. I said that although he had the unquestionable right to decline making any advance to the prince, I contested the propriety of adding to his refusal a remark of such bad taste, the more so as his well-known professed observance of the Sabbath and the strict open fulfilment of his religious duties had led me to suppose that he would have been inspired with more Christian feelings towards his old friend the prince.

It was the evening of that very day (the 1st day of December, 1845) that in my utter despair I determined to write to H.R.H. the Duke of Brunswick for an audience. The next day the duke wrote as follows:—

Le Duc Souverain de Brunswick recevra monsieur Orsi demain (3 décembre) à 4 heures de l'après-midi.

Brunswick House, ce 2 décembre 1845.

The outward appearance of Brunswick House is far from being attractive, and from the heavy, gloomy aspect of the exterior building, one would fancy it more fit for a prison, than for the residence of a gentleman.

The duke had made it still more unsightly. From the entrance-gate to the house, which stood in the middle of a large courtyard, nothing struck your eyes that was cheerful or comfortable. Everything was stiff, dull, and as silent as a graveyard. Two large dogs chained to the wall were the vigilant guardians of the place. Twice had I to show the letter of audience before I could get in. I was at last ushered into a dark, cold room, having a round table in the centre and four chairs, two of which were armchairs, by the fireside. A single candle was lit on the table, the walls were

bare, and no vestige of comfort could be seen, as I expected.

Twenty minutes had already elapsed, when I saw a slight movement in a thick curtain hanging over the side door of the room. All of a sudden the head of a man covered with a huge black plush hood, which concealed all but the nose, peeped in through the curtains. The hood formed part of a long gown, also of black plush, which was fastened to the waist by a thick silk cord. It was the Duke of Brunswick. His hands were plunged in the two side pockets of his *robe de chambre*, grasping a revolver in each one of them, as I learned from himself a few days after my first interview.

The duke came right to the table which stood between us as a sort of barrier. His eyes were flashing through the narrow opening of his hood, as if he imagined I was planning to commit a murder. We looked at each other for a few seconds, which seemed to me to be a long time : at last he broke out, —

"You asked for an audience ; what is it you want ?"

"Your Highness will, I hope, allow me to say that the object for which I came here to-day is such as to require some little time, and I shall consider it a favor if you will let me explain it while your Highness is seated."

By a movement of his hand, he pointed to an armchair by the fireside. The duke sat opposite to me.

"I entreat your Highness to make some allowance for the agitated state of my mind, from the delicate and difficult mission entrusted to me ; and if what I am going to say is unpalatable to you, I crave most earnestly your pardon for having so intruded upon your Highness. Remembering with pleasure the friendly relations which existed between your Highness and Prince Louis Napoleon, during his stay in this country, and acting under the impression that political interests of the greatest magnitude might find a favorable issue in the combined efforts of your Highness and himself, the prince, now a prisoner at Ham, has requested me to make an appeal to your Highness's generosity, for a loan he requires to effect his escape from the prison."

Scarcely had I uttered the last words, than the duke, pulling back his hood with both his hands by a frantic movement, showed his denuded head, and with a sort of indescribable yell, exclaimed, —

"What ! A loan ? Did I understand you right ? Say it again, say it again !"

This sudden burst of fury did not take me by surprise — I was fully prepared to stand it unmoved ; I remained silent a few seconds.

The duke looked at me without uttering a word.

"It is quite natural that your Highness should feel surprised at an application which is one of no ordinary character, but no one better than yourself could see at a glance the political interests at stake, in refusing or complying with the request of the prince for the loan of 6,000*l*."

The duke rose as pale as a ghost, and stretched his arm to lay hold of the bell-rope. Before he could ring, I rose and said, —

"For God's sake, please your Highness, listen to me. I have much to say that can alter your mind. I implore you to hear me for a few seconds."

The duke flung the bell-rope against the wall, and in a stout, stern voice, said, —

"I do not know which I have to admire the most — my own patience or your unheard-of impudence. A loan of 6,000*l*. to Prince Napoleon ! Indeed ! How likely that I should agree to it ! Your prince seems to be unaware that I am a staunch republican — I am the friend of Cavaignac, of Marrast, and of all the chief leaders of that party — I am the largest shareholder in the *National*, which I supply with all the money it requires. Backed by the republican principles, I will and shall wage war against all monarchical powers, and Germany in particular. Your prince's advent to France means nothing, if it does not mean royalty or empire. I will not betray my new friends. I refuse the prince the 6,000*l*. you ask in his name."

This declaration of republican principles on the part of the Duke of Brunswick took me aback. I did not expect that : I had never heard of his being now mixed up with the "National" party. I saw at once that my task was more difficult than I had anticipated.

One may be more or less successful in appealing to the feelings of a man on behalf of another, or in causing a political man to abdicate his former opinions, either by dint of argument or by the tempting vision of his private interests ; but what are the chances of success in trying to bring back to his former faith a convert to principles, the antipodes of those which are the very essence of his *raison d'être*, and this convert to be the Duke of Brunswick — a member of the most aristocratic dynasty in Europe ? However, it flashed through my mind that, as some great in-

centive had worked upon the duke to open his arms to the republican party, a still greater inducement offered to him might possibly bring him back to the ideas he had imbibed from his infancy.

"How far your Highness will benefit by an alliance with the republicans is a matter which has been assuredly taken into serious consideration by you. But you will allow me to remark that the conflict of interests certain to arise between your principles and those of your new allies will not make it a desirable compact, and a split will soon take place, as is always the case in every political alliance resting on one-sided hopes and expectations.

"Your alliance with the republicans, unnatural though it is, offers them at any rate a tangible benefit, the only one they require from you — money.

"In the supposition of their cause being triumphant, they will, the day after their victory, persecute you and fail in all their engagements. The present leaders of the republican party are gentlemen of position and education. I know them personally; but they have the people behind, to whom they are and must be subservient, and to whom they have held out promises which must be kept, whether they like it or not. But what is your gain in all this? Your Highness's object, if I understand you right, is to extend your influence in Germany. It is not France that you may hope to govern. Your alliance with the republicans can only have in view a general revolution, enabling you through the turmoil to foment a general rise in Germany. This too your Highness will find to be a complete fallacy. The German republicans are more solidly republican than the French, and they will prove as much, if not more adverse to any monarchical chief than the French. You will disappear in the vortex of a great catastrophe, and you will not even elicit the interest generally felt for those who sacrifice their all for the promotion of noble and patriotic views."

The duke rose quickly, and said: "You have my answer to the application of the prince. I beg you will convey it to him. I feel deeply for his position, but I see no reason for me to alter my decision."

I saw it was all over. There was a moment of dead silence on both sides. We were face to face for a few seconds. At last I took my hat and walked to the door, which I opened and held by the knob.

"I hope your Highness will forgive my intruding upon you as I have done. In giving me the mission of appealing to you

for the means of recovering his liberty, Prince Louis Napoleon meant something more than putting himself under any pecuniary obligation towards you as a friend. His views were broader, and, under existing circumstances, were more conducive to the political welfare of both. In accepting this mission, and on your granting me this audience, for which I shall ever be grateful, I felt sure of having at last met with the only man capable, by his lofty position, to understand the advantages to be derived by linking his future political prospects to those of the man whose popularity was then at the highest point. I had imagined that your Highness was aware of the true state of public opinion in France as regards the name of Napoleon. Had I been allowed to converse freely with your Highness, I would have brought home to you the irresistible conviction that the prisoner of Ham was destined to mark the milestone at which the old world will finish and the new will begin. I own that my disappointment is extreme. May your Royal Highness not think me too presumptuous in predicting that in less than two years you will regret the refusal made to the demand of the prince."

I bowed and was retiring, when the duke said, "*Restez, je vous prie*. I never believed in prophecies, and still less do I believe in the one referring to the prisoner of Ham. In fact, I have as great a reluctance in believing in prophecies as I have in doing anything of importance on any day bearing in its number the figure 7. Had you asked me for an audience on the 7th, or the 17th, or the 27th, I would have taken no notice of it. However, your prophesying to me the future advent to power of the prince in such glowing colors has awakened my curiosity. I should like to see whether your prophecy will turn out true. Mind, I make no engagement by speaking thus; but as you seem to know the state of public opinion in France better than I do, I may be induced to do something for the prince if you can show me in a tangible and comprehensive way that the advent of the prince to the supreme power in France is simply a *question of time*."

It took me one hour and a half to lay before the duke the real state of French politics. He never interrupted me. At last he got up, and after walking across the room, backwards and forwards, for some time, like a man who awakes from a dream, he said, "Write to the prince that I put 6,000*l.* at his disposal on the following terms:

"1. That the prince shall accept three

bills for 2,000*l.* each, payable in five years at five per cent.

"2. That 800*l.* out of the 6,000*l.* shall be taken by him in shares of the *National* and at par.

"3. That an offensive and defensive alliance shall be entered into between him and me, by which the prince, in the event of his coming to be elected king, president, or emperor, will engage to assist me in my views on Germany, I undertaking to do the same on his behalf in the event of my advent to power in Germany before he succeeds in France.

"4. That you shall start immediately for Ham with my private secretary, Mr. George Thomas Smith, in order to ascertain the state of affairs and carry out the programme in its entirety."

I agreed, in the name of the prince, to the terms proposed by his Highness. Two days afterwards I started for Paris, where I met Mr. Smith, who had left London the day before.

I had great difficulties to overcome before I could obtain the permission to see the prince. Having been a prisoner myself for five years, I was suspected in high quarters. After fifteen days of solicitation, I received the necessary leave to see the prince with Mr. Smith; but as no one was allowed to see the prince except in the presence of the governor, I was obliged to make it appear that Mr. Smith was the purchaser of valuable pictures belonging to the prince. The interview referred only to this transaction. The bills (three in number) to be accepted by the prince were given to him while we were shaking hands. They were returned to me, with the treaty written on satin, in the afternoon, on taking leave of the prince.

On parting from him he handed me a small box and a letter, of which the following is a copy, both addressed to my wife:

Ham: 1854.

My dear Madame Orsi,—I intrust your husband with a gift which I hope will be gladly accepted by you, as it will recall to your mind the great service Orsi has rendered to me during my captivity; and I know too well from your devotedness to me how happy you feel at anything that can soothe my position.

Believe, dear Madame Orsi, in my sincerest friendship.

NAPOLÉON LOUIS BONAPARTE.

Mr. Smith and I arrived in London two days after, and the money having been paid to Messrs. Baring Brothers to the account of the prince, the transaction was completed.

THE ESCAPE.

FROM the day the prince received the information that the sum of 6,000*l.* had been paid to his account at Messrs. Baring Brothers, there was a lull in our mutual correspondence, lest it should give a clue, however slight, to what was being planned at Ham.

Although it was a remarkable feature of the times to see French people brought to honor the memory of the great Napoleon in the person of his nephew, still it was more illustrative of the sympathy the prince had inspired, to see that even from Central America he was receiving marks of the deepest admiration for his noble qualities and the great fortitude with which he bore his misfortune. The probable contingency of the prince recovering his liberty in consequence of the so much-talked-of amnesty, had led the people beyond the Atlantic to hope that he would, when free, emigrate to their more hospitable shores, to avoid future persecution on the part of his enemies.

The prince, while fully aware of the difficulties he would have to overcome to be allowed to go near his dying father, was hesitating as regards his resolve to go so far away to pass the rest of his life. He hinted that if ever he made up his mind to cross the Atlantic, it would be only for the purpose of devoting all his time and energy to the accomplishment of great public works, as, for instance, the construction of a canal connecting the two oceans. Following this idea, the prince gave instructions to a French engineer to study this gigantic operation, with reference to the possibility of utilizing the great lakes which are near the Isthmus for the construction of the canal.

In 1844 M. Castellan was sent by the States of Guatemala, San Salvador, and Honduras, as minister plenipotentiary to King Louis Philippe, with a view of claiming for the canal the protection of the French government, in exchange for large commercial advantages in favor of France. This application having met with a refusal, M. Castellan received leave to visit the prince at Ham, with whom he had a long interview, which ended in M. Castellan offering to put the prince at the head of the undertaking on the basis agreed upon. M. Castellan was much struck with the perfect knowledge the prince had of the colossal work; and being impressed with the importance Central America would have on some future day, he requested the prince to write a book (which the prince

did some time afterwards) showing the possibility of constructing the canal at no great outlay, by making the two lakes, De Leon and De Nicaragua, available for the purpose. On hearing of the projected scheme, and of what was going on between the prince and the representative of their country, the inhabitants of those States applied to their respective governments for leave to intrust the prince with the conduct of this great work.

In consequence of this decision, M. Castellan wrote the prince the following letter:—

Leon de Nicaragua:
December 6, 1845.

Prince L.,—I received with the greatest pleasure your favor of the 12th of August, conveying to me the expression of your friendship and esteem, for which I feel highly honored. You have embodied in it the development of your ideas respecting the canal of Nicaragua, which seem to me to be most suitably directed towards the attainment of the prosperity of Central America. You inform me at the same time of your more favorable disposition to come to this country, to give by your presence and your co-operation a great impulse to the execution of this large undertaking, which would suffice to satisfy the greatest ambition, and of your readiness to accept the direction of it, without aiming at anything else but the accomplishment of a task worthy the great name you bear.

Before going farther into the subject, so interesting to my country, allow me to say that nothing can give a more noble and benevolent idea of the disposition of your heart, than the flattering way your Highness has thought fit to allude to my slender merits.

When I came to France as minister plenipotentiary, and before my departure for Europe, I felt exceedingly desirous of paying you a visit at Ham. I longed to see you, not only on account of the popularity of your name in the world, but also because I had been able to judge for myself of the high esteem in which you were held in your native land, from your noble character, and from the great sympathy elicited in your behalf by your misfortunes.

I admire, prince, your resignation, and your love for that France wherein you are a prisoner; but I felt a secret joy in seeing how vividly your mind became exalted at the picture of the immense work, so eagerly taken up by my country, and likely to promote so largely the progress of civilization.

Both your intentions conveyed to me and the memos contained in your letter have excited here very great enthusiasm, joined with the deepest gratitude.

I am happy to inform your Highness that the government of this State, fully convinced that the only means to provide for the capital necessary for the undertaking is to put it under the patronage of a name like yours, independent by fortune and social standing, and which,

while it inspires the confidence of both the worlds, divests it of all fear of foreign domination—this government, I repeat, has resolved to fix the choice upon your Highness as the only person capable of answering the required conditions.

Brought up in a republic, your Highness has shown by your noble behavior in Switzerland in 1828 to what degree a free people may rely on your abnegation, and we feel assured that if the great Napoleon has rendered himself immortal by his victories, your Highness may acquire in our country a like glory by peaceful works which cause no tears to be shed except those of gratefulness.

From the day you set your foot on our soil will a new era of prosperity begin for its people.

What we ask of your Highness is not unworthy of your solicitude, for in 1830 King William of Holland had accepted a similar proposal.

If we are not in a position to empower you at once to commence operations, it is owing to the recess of the Legislature, to which we are bound to apply for the examination of the treaty executed by me last year with Count de Hompesch, the chairman of the Belgian Colonization Company. This treaty having been less favorably entertained than we expected, it is more than probable that the government will be authorized to apply to you, and by so doing will act in accordance with the national wishes.

The government seems determined to give me the necessary instructions enabling me to come to an understanding with your Highness respecting this object.

The recent popular commotions of this country have also caused delay, but as the insurgents are in a great minority, and the government is supported by public opinion, I think that the revolution will soon be at an end, and that the restoration of order will enable us to set at work as promptly as possible. Besides, the government is convinced that the construction of the canal will call for the employment of those out of work, and will be the means of pacifying and bringing welfare to this country and people, tried by the horrors of civil war for such a long time.

As much excited by the impatience of seeing a work commence to which I mean to devote all my time and energy, as I am by the wish of seeing your Highness rule the destinies of my country, I long for the moment when I shall be able to see you at Ham, were it only for a few hours, and in the hopeful expectation of being present at your deliverance, for which I constantly offer to God my most heartfelt prayers,

I beg your Highness to accept, etc., etc.

CASTELLAN.

A few months after this communication, the Prince of Montenegro, minister for foreign affairs, forwarded to Prince Louis Napoleon the necessary powers to form a

company in Europe, and informed him that the government by decree of January 8, 1846, had resolved that the canal connecting the two oceans was to be called the "Canal Napoleon de Nicaragua." M. Marcoleta, *chargé d'affaires* of the republic in Belgium and Holland, went to Ham with instructions to sign a definitive treaty with the prince. Presently we shall see how it happened that the projected scheme was not carried into effect by the prince.

A new phase in the captivity of the prince sprang up suddenly by the news he received from Florence, respecting the health of his father, the ex-king of Holland, who resided in Florence under the name of Comte de St. Leu. A complete invalid in a foreign land, the father of the prince was much distressed at the thought of being alone and separated from his son, upon whom were centred all the feelings of his soul. The prince, whose affection and sense of duty towards his father were extreme, felt acutely the pangs of his situation, and regardless of any further consideration, made up his mind to carry out his resolves.

In the month of August 1845 the Comte de St. Leu laid a request before the French government, that his son should be set at liberty. To that effect he sent M. Poggioli, an intimate and devoted friend of his, to Paris, with letters for Messrs. Decazes, Molé, and Montalivet, entreating these gentlemen to persuade M. Duchatel (then minister of the interior) to comply with his request. M. Poggioli having failed in his mission, immediately informed the prince of the result of his application. In this emergency the prince wrote to the minister of the interior, and declared that should the French government grant him the favor of going to Florence to see his dying father, he would pledge his word of honor to come back and to put himself at the disposal of the government on his being summoned to do so.

The minister, after reading the letter of the prince, promised to lay the matter before the council of ministers, and requested M. Poggioli to call for the answer on the day appointed.

"Tell the prince," said the minister, "that I have laid his request before the council of ministers, who consider it is not in their power to comply with it, as no pardon can be granted that does not emanate directly from the royal prerogative." Under these circumstances the prince resolved to write directly to the king, and on the 14th of January he accomplished by

this letter the greatest sacrifice which filial affection could exact from him.

January 14, 1846.

Sire, — It is with the deepest emotion that I address your Majesty, to ask the favor of being allowed to quit France, if it were only for a very short time.

For the last five years, the happiness of breathing the air of my own country has been for me a great compensation for the pangs of captivity, but the age and infirmities of my father imperatively require my filial care. He has made an appeal to those who are well known for their devotion to your Majesty, and I feel it my duty to join my exertions to theirs.

The Council of Ministers was of opinion that the subject is not within the limits of their decision. I therefore address your Majesty, fully sensible of the kindness of your feelings, and venture to lay my request before your generous consideration.

Your Majesty will appreciate, I hope, the step I take, which engages my gratitude; and moved by the loneliness of an exile, who when on the throne deserved the esteem of all Europe, your Majesty will be induced to comply with the prayer of my father and myself.

I beg your Majesty will accept the expression of my deep respect.

NAPOLÉON LOUIS BONAPARTE.

The king appeared to be pleased with this letter, and stated that he considered the guarantee offered by the prince to be sufficient; but the ministers maintained their refusal, by resolving that in order to leave to the king the full and spontaneous exercise of pardoning, pardon should be deserved and *frankly asked for*.

A few weeks after this communication the prince wrote me the following letter: —

Ham: March 2, 1846.

Dear Orsi, — Both your letters and papers duly to hand. I thank you very much for your zeal in executing my commissions.

Now I must tell you what is going on, that you may report it to our friend.*

We must acknowledge first and foremost that by nobody are you better served than by your own enemies. The fact is that, politically speaking, nothing could be more advantageous to me than what has taken place. No sooner was the refusal of M. Duchatel known to me, than I wrote to the most influential deputies. The consequence was, that the Chamber appeared sympathetically moved, and thirty-two members of the House, among whom were Dupont, De l'Eure, Arago, Marie, Abatucci, Odillon-Barrot, Lamartine, and Dupin, met in a bureau to read my letter, and resolved that Odillon-Barrot should be deputed to go to the king, who, while giving *de l'eau bénite de cour* disowned formally his own minister. Now I hope the matter will be taken

* The Duke of Brunswick.

up by the deputies, with whom, at any rate, I have been corresponding.

M. Thiers has also written to me a most amiable letter, in a political point of view, and I have every reason to be pleased, although my heart bleeds at not being able to go and see my father.

Tell Lord M. on my part that Lord Londonderry has promised to speak of me before the House of Lords, and that I should feel happy if he would second the motion.

I also should be very glad if you could find an opportunity of reverting to the shares,* and ask for the amount in cash on another document.

Good-bye, my dear Orsi. Many affectionate things to Madame Orsi, and rely always on my sincerest friendship.

N. L. B.

P.S. — Could you let me know in a most authentic manner what is the insurance of a merchantman going to Lima by the Cape Horn, and the insurance of a similar ship bound to Vera Cruz in the Gulf of Mexico? What I ask is not very urgent, but I should like to have the most correct information about it, in order to ascertain the difference with reference to the ships crossing the Isthmus of Panama, supposing a canal between the two oceans being constructed.

There was no other channel left to the prince but to apply to the Chamber of Deputies, through the most influential members of the deputation. Messrs. Dupont, Arago, Lamartine, Odillon-Barrot, and several others joined with the greatest zeal on behalf of the prince. M. Thiers himself offered his influence to further the views of the prince; but all this proved of no avail. No hope for the prince to recover his liberty, not one chance left save — the escape! This bold attempt was full of danger; there were many things to be dreaded in the event of its failing. Besides an increase in the severity of more stringent measures of precaution prescribed by the government, there was the idea of being ridiculed, which would assuredly have followed the failure of this most hazardous undertaking.

The man who had boldly faced the danger of being shot at Strasbourg and Boulogne was actually trembling at the thought of the endless insults and mockeries that would have awaited him if recaptured and brought back to prison. But his mind being made up to it, the following plan was concocted, as the most practical and safe in its execution.

The governor of the fortress of Ham was an honest and distinguished officer, whose sense of duty was very keen, and of

soldier-like strictness. His kindness to the prince was manifested on various occasions. Every evening he used to play whist with the prince, General Montholon, and Doctor Conneau, who were the prince's companions in his captivity; but it would have been useless for the prince to attempt drawing the governor into any dereliction of his duty.

The governor was watchful, and never entrusted to others the care of ascertaining twice a day that the prince was his prisoner. The first part of the prince's plan was to impress the governor with a false security regarding the idea of his escape; and to attain this object, he caused a great many letters to be addressed to himself (which the governor was ordered to read) conveying the contingency of an amnesty for all political prisoners to take place next June. These letters coming from Paris, where both public opinion and the press were unanimous in calling for it, produced the desired effect. The event of an amnesty was plausible, as new elections were to take place shortly after June, and the government seemed anxious to secure them in their favor by every possible device. The next part of the programme consisted in adopting a plan, simple in its conception and as much as possible easy to carry out in its details; but to understand how this could be effected, a description of the locality, and of other particulars relating to the regulations of the fortress are necessary.

The citadel of Ham forms a square, and on each of the four angles is erected a round tower. The towers are connected together by narrow ramparts. There is only one gate, on the north-east side, which is protected by a strongly-built square tower, made to correspond with a similar one on the north-west side. The ramparts on the south and east sides are surrounded by the canal St. Quantis. The river Somme is not very far from it. On both sides of the inner yard, there are two barracks built in bricks: at the farther end of one of them stands the prison, a sad-looking, damp, low building, having close at its back the outward ramparts which intercept both light and air. Such was the place where Prince Louis Napoleon was condemned to spend the rest of his life.

One of these ramparts became his whole world. There, in a little corner, he found sufficient ground for cultivating a few flowers of which he was very fond. There he could take his daily walks, thinking of his friends, and waiting for the delivery of his letters, which, although read by the gov-

* The prince alludes to the shares of the *National*.

ernor before being handed to him, afforded him an indescribable gratification.

The garrison of Ham was four hundred men strong. Sixty of them were always on duty at the citadel. There was besides a host of gaolers and warders, to whom the surveillance of the prince was more particularly entrusted. The room occupied by the prince during the first few days of his confinement was in a most deplorable state of repair. The ceilings were perforated, the paper falling in shreds, the flooring broken to pieces, the doors and windows so shaky as to let the draughts of air through them; but I must not omit to state, that owing to the many complaints and representations made to the minister, the governor was at last ordered to lay out six hundred francs in repairs and purchase of the few things considered indispensable for the health of the prince. The sum allowed for the daily expenses of the prince was seven francs: a mean provision certainly for the nephew of the great emperor, which shows by what feelings the government was actuated towards him.

The prince at this time, when arranging for his escape, had been five years a prisoner in the fortress of Ham. Thus, after the most mature consideration he made up his mind to adopt the simplest plan, which consisted in finding a pretext for introducing workmen into the prison, so that by finding an opportunity of dressing himself in the garb of one of them, he might in such disguise go out of the gate of the citadel. Just as the prince had decided to ask for some urgently required repairs in his room, the governor brought him the good news that he had received orders from Paris to have the staircase and corridors painted and repaired at once.

The governor had never allowed the strictest precautions of surveillance to relax. The guard on night duty was always doubled, and on the clock striking ten, the game of whist was invariably interrupted. The warders were constantly sitting at the bottom of the staircase: a precaution which the governor himself never failed to ascertain, before shutting the outer door and putting the key in his pocket. The prince was now watching every step, every movement, of the two warders. He remarked that on certain days of the week one of them was in the habit of going out to fetch the newspapers, thereby leaving his comrade alone for a quarter of an hour. This was most important for the success of the operation that this short space should be made available by drawing the attention of the warder to something else.

The prince had little or nothing to fear on the part of the sentinels, no escape being considered possible except by outside co-operation. The authorities had given strict orders to prevent people from approaching the fortress; all persons allowed to enter the citadel were carefully searched, but every one was let out without suspicion.

The following arrangements were made in consequence: Charles Thélín, the devoted *valet de chambre* of the prince, would ask for leave to go to St. Quentin for a cab. It was quite natural and usual that he should go out. The prince, in a workman's garb, would go out of the same gate and at the same time. This plan had the double advantage of giving Thélín the chance of drawing to himself personally the attention of the soldiers and warders, by playing with "Ham," the prince's favorite dog, so well known to the whole garrison; and moreover it gave Thélín the opportunity of preventing any one from going near the disguised workman as he crossed the large square to reach the gate. The repairs in the building had already been continued eight days, during which time the prince had been able to ascertain the nature of the surveillance to which the workmen were submitted. He had remarked that on their arriving in the prison they were searched one after the other, first by a sergeant on duty, and then by the warders. In the evening, on their leaving the place, they were searched again in the presence of the governor himself. The prince also remarked that a keen lookout was kept on every workman loitering about in some isolated part of the citadel, but that no attention was paid to those who, in a natural and easy way, were going in the direction of the gate to fetch tools or materials.

This proposed mode of effecting his escape was simple, but very bold. The prince made up his mind to carry it out at once. It was decided the attempt should be made in the morning, not only because the governor was never up early, but that besides the advantage of having to deal with one guard only, it had also the advantage of affording the prince the chance of catching the four o'clock train at the Belgian railway.

Everything was ready for the 23rd of May. Unfortunately, in one sense, the prince was visited on that very day by some friends whom he had known in England, and whom he had expected long before, but he had the clever idea of asking one of the visitors to lend his passport

to Thélín, which was readily complied with.

We shall presently see how useful this passport was for the success of the undertaking. Early on the morning of May 25, when everything was calm and silent within the citadel, the prince, Dr. Conneau, and Thélín were watching, from behind the curtains of the window, the arrival of the workmen. It was most unfortunate that the only private of the garrison whom they disliked should be on duty that morning at the very door of the prince's prison. This man was exceedingly watchful, and never failed questioning the workmen on what they heard or saw in the prison. Luckily, however, on that day a review of the troops took place, and the grenadier was obliged to join his battalion and to be replaced. The workmen arrived at last; they were all masons and painters, which was another source of disappointment, as the prince had made his arrangements to simulate a joiner; but there was no time to be lost.

The prince at once shaved his moustache, which produced a very marked change in his appearance.

He took a dagger with him and two letters, with which he never parted: one of his mother and the other of the emperor. Both these letters the prince always kept as a talisman.

The prince having dressed as usual, put over his waistcoat a thick linen shirt, then a blouse, not only clean but well shaped. Then a blue pair of trousers, worn out seemingly by working. Over the first blouse he put on another, but a very bad one, an old apron of blue material, and a black, long-haired wig with a greasy cap, which completed the disguise. Both his hands and face were soiled with paint.

The prince drank a cup of coffee, put on a pair of wooden shoes, took in his mouth a clay pipe, and with a shelf on his shoulders, kept himself ready to go out. At 7 o'clock in the morning Thélín called on all the workmen who were repairing the stairs to come and take the *coup du matin* (a glass of wine).

After desiring a servant to place wine and glasses on the table of the dining-room, Thélín rushed up-stairs to tell the prince the moment had arrived to start. Thélín came down-stairs again to meet the two warders, one of whom he drew a little farther in the corridor under pretence of having something important to say, and kept him with his back turned to the prince, who was coming down-stairs. The other warder, Dupuis, was still on the watch;

but owing to the book-shelf carried by the prince on his shoulder being thrust between him and Dupuis, the latter was obliged to make a rapid movement to avoid it, thereby preventing the face of the prince from being noticed by him.

The prince stepped through the door into the yard without being noticed; a workman was following him as if he wanted to speak to him; Thélín called him, and ordered him at once to go to the dining-room to do a job there. On the prince passing before the first sentinel he let his pipe fall from his mouth; the prince quietly removed the shelf from his shoulder, picked up the pipe, struck a light and lit his pipe again, whilst the soldier looked at him, and then continued his beat. Close to the door of the *cantine* he came near the officer, who was reading a letter; a little farther on a few privates were sitting on a wooden bench in the sun. The lodge-keeper was on the threshold of his lodge, but only looked at Thélín, who was following the prince with the dog held by a string. The sergeant whose duty it was to open and shut the gate turned quickly his looks to the supposed workman, but a movement the prince made with the large shelf compelled him to make a step backwards. He opened the gate! *The prince was free!* Thélín was following him very close.

Between the two drawbridges the prince met two workmen coming right upon him on the side of his face unprotected by the shelf. They looked at him very attentively as if they were surprised at not knowing him. The prince acting as a man who is tired of carrying a weight on the right shoulder, whirled it round on the left one, and just as he was in terror of being questioned, he heard one of them say, "Oh, it is Berthon!"

The attempt turned out to be a complete success.

The prince hastened to join Thélín on the main road leading to St. Quentin, where he was waiting with the cab he had hired the day before. As the prince was about flinging away the plank off his shoulder, he heard a cab coming from St. Quentin, which he let go by to avoid being remarked. He then jumped into the vehicle (an open one), shook the dust off his clothes, threw his wooden shoes into a ditch and darted away, himself taking the reins to look like a driver.

A few minutes had scarcely passed when they saw two gendarmes coming out of the village called St. Sulpice, but they rode in the direction of Peronne before they came

the carriage. The five leagues which separated St. Quentin from Ham were rapidly accomplished. Every time they changed horse, Thélín hid his face as much as he possibly could in his handkerchief, pretending to cough or blow his nose; but notwithstanding his precaution, several persons knew him, and an old woman expressed her surprise at seeing him keeping company with a man so shabbily dressed.

Before entering St. Quentin the prince threw off his rough clothes, but kept on his wig, and on leaving the carriage followed the road which runs along the walls of the town leading to Cambrai, and waiting for Thélín, who had gone to M. Abric's, the postmaster, to hire a chaise with two horses, in order, said he, to reach Cambrai in good time. He would leave there both cab and horse, which he would fetch on his way back. M. Abric being absent, Madame Abric did what was required with the greatest promptitude, and as she knew Thélín well, she made him accept a good slice of *paté*, which he promised to eat very soon. This turned out to be most acceptable to the prince, who made a good breakfast of it a little later. The prince had been some time on the main road waiting for the arrival of Thélín, who had been detained longer than was anticipated. In the prince's anxiety of having missed him, he asked a passer-by whether he had met a post chaise on his way. "No," said he, and on he went. It was the *procureur du roi* of St. Quentin!

At last the post-chaise came in sight, the joyful barking of the dog Ham, who was with Thélín, made the prince aware of its near approach. It was then nine o'clock P.M.

Supposing the prince's escape could be known in the citadel at that moment, it was impossible for the authorities to take the necessary steps in the disorder attending such an event, without affording the fugitives sufficient time to be out of their reach. The post-chaise entered Valenciennes at 2.45 P.M. "Your passport," asked the guard. Thélín exhibited the one which the Englishman had given to the prince at Ham. "All right!"

As there was no train for Brussels before four o'clock, the prince felt tempted to hire another post-chaise to reach the frontier, but gave up the idea, as he remembered it would look suspicious to travel in such an unusual way.

Both the prince and Thélín therefore waited as patiently as they could at the station, the eyes of Thélín being con-

stantly turned to the only place whence the gendarmes could come. "Ah! here is Thélín," said an old man in plain clothes. Thélín turned round, and to his great terror recognized a gendarme, who had given up the service to fill a situation in the *Chemin de Fer du Nord*. The man asked how the prince was, little dreaming he was so near him.

At last the train came in, and they took their seats.

The prince soon reached Brussels, Ostend, and England, and arrived in London on the Derby Day of 1846 (May 27). The prince immediately came to my house. I hardly knew him when he entered the room, so great was the change in his appearance by the shaving of his moustaches. Our first meeting was one of mutual joy, gratification, and thankfulness, at the happy result of the bold attempt, to which the prince warmly and gratefully insisted that I had mainly contributed.

It was from his own lips that I received the details of his most wonderful escape.

No sooner was the prince safe on the British soil than he wrote letters to Sir Robert Peel, Lord Aberdeen, and the French ambassador.

To the latter (Le Comte de St. Aulaire) the prince wrote the following letter:—

London: May 28, 1846.

Sir, — I come frankly to declare to the man who was the friend of my mother, that in escaping from my prison I never intended to repeat against the French government the attempts that have proved so disastrous to myself. My only object was to see my old father again.

Before making up my mind to have recourse to the last extremity—flight—I exhausted every means of entreaty to be allowed to go to Florence, giving at the same time every possible guarantee compatible with my honor. All my solicitations having met with refusal, I have done what the Duc de Guise and the Duc de Nemours did under Henry the Fourth in similar circumstances.

I beg you will make known to the French government my peaceful intentions, and I hope that this declaration, utterly spontaneous, will have the effect of shortening the time of captivity of those of my friends who are still in prison.

N. L. BONAPARTE.

The narrative of the escape would remain incomplete if I did not relate what passed at Ham after the departure of the prince.

Dr. Conneau, whose devotedness to the prince had filled his whole life, had undertaken the difficult task of making it appear, as long as possible, that it had not taken place.

The very first thing he did was to shut the door of the bedroom, next to the sitting-room, where he had a great fire made, despite the heat of the day, alleging the indisposition of the prince. At eight o'clock A.M., breakfast being ready, the doctor ordered it to be laid in his own bedroom, the more so as General Montholon was also ill in bed. He added that the prince had been taking medicine, and to convince everybody that what he stated was true, he manufactured a mixture of coffee and roasted bread with addition of a quantity of nitric acid, which being boiled for a few minutes, filled the rooms with such a sick-room odor as to give the warders the conviction there was no mistake about it!

The governor soon came to inquire for the prince.

The doctor said that he was rather better, and was taking a little rest on the sofa in the sitting-room.

All went right until seven o'clock in the evening, when the governor came again, and on the doctor telling him the prince was better, the governor said, "As the prince is better I must see him; I must speak to him." The simulated form of a man had been adroitly arranged in the bed, having what seemed to be his head turned towards the wall. The doctor called the prince. No answer. Turning to the governor, he said, "The prince is fast asleep." The governor did not appear quite satisfied with this prolonged pantomime. "I will take a seat in the next room," said he, "till his sleep is over. By the bye, how is it that Thélín is not back yet? The diligence has arrived and Thélín not here. Strange, very strange! Let us see."

The doctor rushed into the room, and coming out again said, "No, no, he is still sleeping;" but the governor could stand this anxious suspense no longer. He entered the room, and pulling the bedclothes right off, discovered the trick!

"Good God!" said he, "the prince is gone!"

The reader will easily imagine his state of bewildered distraction.

In the course of the next day the order came to arrest the governor, the doctor, and all the warders. Doctor Conneau was handcuffed and sent to Peronne to be tried, and sentenced to three months' imprisonment. Charles Thélín was sentenced *by default* to six months' of the same penalty.

The first thing the prince did was to fulfil the sacred duty which had induced him to undertake such a daring adventure.

The illness of his father making rapid progress, the prince had no time to lose if he wished to bid his father a last farewell. He applied for a passport to the Austrian ambassador in London, who was at the same time the accredited representative of the grand duke of Tuscany. The passport was refused, on the plea that it was a matter concerning the French government. The grand duke of Tuscany was solicited by various members of the family to grant the request, but he answered that he could not tolerate the presence of the prince twenty-four hours in the duchy, owing to the French influence opposing it. The Belgian government was still harsher, as it inscribed the name of the prince among those who were condemned to extradition by the clauses of the treaties.

LONDON: March 8, 1879.